



TESTIMONY OF AMBER VLANGAS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESTORATIVE ACTION ALLIANCE, INC.
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING MARCH 14, 2022.

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissell, Representative Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Amber Vlangas, and I am a resident of Sherman, Connecticut and a volunteer with Restorative Action Alliance (RAA). We are a regional advocacy group made up of anti-carceral crime survivors, individuals who have been impacted by the criminal legal system, and restorative justice advocates and practitioners.

I am writing in support of:

- **S.B. No. 387:** An Act Concerning The Recommendations Of The Juvenile Justice Policy And Oversight Committee. - RAA supports the year-round efforts of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee, a group made up of actors with expertise and desire to evaluate the available evidence to make recommendations with the best interest of both children and the public safety of our state in mind. In particular, we strongly support the expansion to include directly-impacted people on the JJPOC.
- **S.B. No. 392:** An Act Concerning Statements Made By Juveniles. - RAA supports a child's need to have a parent present when making statements to the police, and does NOT support the arbitrary exclusion of children ages 17 and 18 from this protection. Every child should have a fair chance for developmentally appropriate support and due process while interacting with all parts of the criminal legal system.

I am writing in opposition to the following bills:

- **S.B. No. 16: (COMM):** An Act Addressing Gun Violence And Juvenile Crime - RAA opposes the language that provides for the expansion of the definition of "serious juvenile crime", affording the possibility of the transfer of additional children to adult court, allows for GPS monitoring of children, and expands the amount of time a child can be detained.
- **S.B. No. 365:** An Act Concerning Juvenile And Criminal Justice Reforms - RAA does not support the automatic transfer of any child to the adult system. We also oppose the use of electronic monitoring to surveil youth pre-trial. Such monitoring calls for detainment of the child if GPS agreements are violated, not taking into account real-life circumstances that are not tied to flight risk or likelihood of a criminal action. Electronic monitoring is an opportunity for failure rather than success.
- **S.B. No. 386:** An Act Concerning A Study Of The Juvenile Delinquency Laws Of This State. - RAA Supports the work of the JJPOC, and feel that this proposal duplicates their efforts. Furthermore, the time allotted for the proposed committee is simply insufficient to study the issue, and the proposed membership excludes the voices of impacted people.

Restorative Action Alliance

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- **H.B. No. 5417:** An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice Services And Firearms Background Checks - While we oppose a number of measures outlined in this bill, we particularly oppose the expansion of the amount of time that a young person can be incarcerated in youth prison. Prisons are inherently destructive, dehumanizing and violent. We are not aware of research that concludes that extended periods of incarceration for youth increases public safety. In fact the research shows the opposite to be true. We support restoration and support services over incarceration and therefore oppose this bill.
- **H.B. No. 5418:** An Act Revising Juvenile And Criminal Justice Statutes And Insurance Statutes Concerning Theft Of a Motor Vehicle - This bill has a number of harmful provisions that will disproportionately impact historically marginalized communities and poor families in our state to include: the use of GPS monitoring, lowering the allowable age for transfer to adult court to as low as 13 years old, language that prioritizes detention over community-based interventions, and the exclusion of directly impacted people from the proposed committee to study criminal justice policies in the state.

While these bills purport to advance public safety, many of their proposed solutions have been proven to have the opposite effect. For example, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has determined that “a transfer to the adult criminal justice system typically increases rather than decreases rates of violence among transferred youth.”¹ and the U.S. Department of Justice concluded in 2010 that transferring juveniles to adult court for trial and sentencing has produced increased recidivism.²

At Restorative Action Alliance, we believe that all people, particularly children, have value. We know that a safe society includes the opportunity for every person to be treated fairly, be able to meet their basic needs, and have access to the tools and supports that will allow them to thrive. This will only come through investments in education, poverty prevention, healthcare, affordable housing, and employment opportunities for all.

We join the CT Justice Alliance (CTJA) in emphasizing that youth justice policies must be based on data and research about youth development and delinquency to promote improved outcomes for youth, communities and families. **We must ask Connecticut legislators to enact solutions that put the actual, long-term safety of all those living in our state over proposals designed to calm unfounded public fears caused by media sensationalism and politically motivated misinformation campaigns.** We encourage members of the committee to take a look at helpful facts and figures, as well as proposed solutions that are published by CTJA [here](#).

We ask the committee to report **SB 387 and SB 392 favorably**, because its proposals come out of the collaborative and thoughtful work of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. We urge the committee to oppose the other bills listed above, which would have Connecticut moving backwards to increase hard-on crime policies that gave rise to mass incarceration, harm children and families across our state, and make us all less safe.

¹ Robert Hahn et al., *Effects on Violence of Laws and Policies Facilitating the Transfer of Youth from the Juvenile to the Adult Justice System*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Nov 30, 2007) <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5609a1.htm>

² U.S. Department of Justice, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, June 2010 <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/220595.pdf>